

2020 MCC Creative Writing Contest

First Place - Fiction Category

"A. Bradley" by Hannah DeVries

Grace Clemency watched from the stairwell as Henry Reed shook hands with her father. She couldn't believe this was happening! Henry had been working for her father since he was just a boy, and now he was leaving Boston to stake a claim out west. Memories flooded her mind of times they'd spent together, and the long talks they'd had. She had always hoped that he had feelings for her, as she did for him. There had been moments she'd been sure he cared for her, but the signs would disappear as quickly as they'd come. She didn't dare tell her friends, or parents, for fear of how they would react. It was so unfair! Why should it matter that he was below her class?

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She couldn't make him fall in love with her in person, but just maybe, she could get him to fall in love with her on paper. After thinking of a pen name, Grace began writing.

Dear Mr. Reed

My name is Alice Bradly. I recently came across your ad in my local post office. While I do not normally pay much attention to such ads, there was something in yours that compelled me to respond. The kindness you portrayed in your words convinced me that you are a good man. I am not accustomed to farm work. However, I promise you that I would work hard to do my very best to help you on your claim. I look forward to corresponding with you and await your reply.

Sincerely,

A. Bradley

Grace brought her letter to the post office on the other side of town, and with shaky hands, started it on its way to Henry. She went to the post office as much as possible within the next few weeks. Just when she was about to give up on receiving a response, her first letter arrived. Grace excitedly tore open the letter and began to read.

Dear Alice,

I hope you don't mind if I call you Alice, but I think that, because of our situation, we should be on a first name basis. Thank you for answering my ad. You seem like a good woman, who would be a hard worker. I need to let you know that life here isn't easy. There are wild animals, rough winters, and if the crops don't grow it's hard to survive. I don't want to scare you, but you need to know what you would be getting yourself into. I also think we need to work on getting to know each other. This is not something anyone should go into lightly.

Sincerely,

Henry Reed

Grace was delighted that Henry wanted to re-visit her (but she was a little nervous about it).

“You’re Alice?”

“I’ve loved you for a long time, and when I saw your ad, I made up the pen name A. Bradley. I thought that maybe...” Grace paused and looked away, too embarrassed to finish. Henry gently lifted her chin so that she was looking at him.

“You never answered my question.” He said kneeling once more.

“Grace Clemency will you marry me?” He asked smiling.

“Yes!” Grace shouted, laughing. Henry sprang to his feet and grabbed Grace, swinging her around in a circle.

“I have something for you.”_ m